

21 June 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer for Near East & South Asia
Chief, Near East & South Asia Division, DO

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: NSC on Middle East, 21 June 1983

1. Attached is the way I had to boil down the material given to me by Graham for today's briefing. If one goes on much longer and then the Secretaries of State and Defense discuss their policy proposals at the same length, there is not enough time for discussion.

2. I prefer to have more specific and recent new facts to put into this kind of a briefing when they are available. This is pretty much the nature and scale of the judgments I need and they are better if they can be substantiated or given a timeliness by recent reports.

William J. Casey

Attachment

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Intelligence Briefing for NSC Meeting on Middle East

21 June 1983

Israel

- Domestic pressure for partial withdrawal - Israeli casualties up over 500 - almost at Vietnam level on proportion basis - Begin down in polls somewhat. Labor calling for phased but complete unilateral withdrawal. Unlikely Begin would withdraw unilaterally prior to visit here. Partial withdrawal not likely to significantly reduce casualties - most from Shias in south.

- Partial withdrawal would be critical test of Gemayel's ability to control Lebanon - likely to review factional fighting among Druze and Christians - Lebanon doesn't want partial withdrawal without assurances that it will lead to full withdrawal and that area vacated can be policed by Lebanese army and multinational force.

PL0

- Israeli withdrawal would encourage PL0 - claim credit for guerrilla activity and expand presence in north and increase attacks on Israeli-PL0 and Syrians increase aid to Druze and infiltration thru Shrif (sp?) into Israeli security zone.

Syria

- Syria will see Israeli withdrawal as triumph for their hard line - perception in Arab world that Israelis have pulled back and Assad will be portrayed as in the ascendency.

- We see Assad as firmly against Lebanon-Israel agreement. Encouraged by support of Soviets [redacted]

[redacted] found him comfortable with his current position.

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- Seems to be some distance between position of President Assad and his brother Rifat, head of defense companies - elite military formation within the Syrian military.

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Soviets

- Will go all out to frustrate any US-sponsored agreement for Middle East peace - maintain military support to Syria even in face of attack by Israelis - will try to avert hostilities while keeping tensions high - attempting to bring radical forces in area together - supporting unity within PL0, therefore Arafat, and trying to bring about rapprochement between Syria and Iraq - and are working for better Syrian-Jordanian relations - but there are limits to what they can accomplish in this. We see the Soviets as more determined than ever to get piece of action in Middle East peace process.

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In Sum:

- Israelis unlikely to withdraw before Begin visit.
- This provides another month to assess Syrian intentions and significance of any differences between Rifat and his brother.
- We do have critical intelligence gap. We know that Soviets retain command and control over SA-5s in Moscow but we do not know the ground rules that the Syrians and Soviets have established between themselves in the event of escalation - will Soviets use SA-5 on Israeli planes flying over Lebanon - we don't know.